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ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSM-03 OC-06 CCO-00

DODE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /039 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RNA/NE:AAVACCARO:CA

APPROVED BY INR/RNA:PHSTODDARD

SSM-CWKONTOS

DESIRED DISTRIBUTION

SSM

-----045941 251040Z /21

R 242059Z AUG 77

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION SINAI

INFO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 202108

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 387 - AUGUST 24, 1977

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

1. EGYPT. EMBASSY CAIRO REPORTS THAT SINCE THE AUGUST
17 PROPAGANDA ATTACK ON QADHAFI THE EGYPTIAN MEDIA
HAS BEEN RELATIVELY MILD IN ITS TREATMENT OF THE LIBYAN
LEADER. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS HAS REFERRED TO SUCH THINGS
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AS CUBAN-SOVIET "PLOTS" TO INCITE INCIDENTS BETWEEN
EGYPT AND LIBYA, IT HAS NOT ATTACKED QADHAFI PERSONALLY.
EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTS THAT DESPITE SADAT'S WILLINGNESS
TO GIVE THE PROPOSAL DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT WITH LIBYA
A CHANCE, HE REMAINCONVINCED THAT QADHAFI IS A THREAT
TO THE MIDDLE EAST EFFORT AND A SURROGATE FOR SOVIET
POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA. (CONFIDENTIAL)

2. LEBANON. EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT SYRIAN, PALESTINIAN, AND LEBANESE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE APPLICATION OF THE SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON FOR FIFTEEN DAYS. MEANWHILE, LEBANESE CHRISTIANS HAVE CONDEMNED A PLO REQUEST THAT THE ARAB LEAGUE TAKE UP SOUTH LEBANON, BECAUSE ONLY THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT CAN MAKE SUCH A REQUEST.

3. INDEED, THE KEY TO MAINTAINING CONTROL OF THE SITUATION IN THE WAKE OF LAST SUNDAY'S INCIDENTS IN THE SHOUF AREA, WILL BE THE ACTIONS OF THE ARAB DEFENSE FORCE AND THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. CHRISTIAN LEADERS WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE ADF'S FAILURE TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR CHRISTIAN AREAS PRIOR TO AND FOLLOWING KAMAL JUMBLATT'S ASSASSINATION IN MARCH. THEY WERE ALSO CRITICAL OF PRESIDENT SARKIS' HANDLING OF THE SITUATION. ADF UNITS APPEAR TO HAVE MOVED FORCEFULLY TO CONTROL THE VIOLENCE IN THE SHOUF, ALTHOUGH ONE SOURCE INDICATES THE ADF FAILED TO ISOLATE THE AREA UNTIL SEVERAL HOURS AFTER THE INITIAL INCIDENT. LEBANESE INTERIOR MINISTER SALMAN HAS ANNOUNCED A FULL-SCALE INVESTIGATION. REPORTEDLY SEVERAL ARRESTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE.

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4. CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE DEMANDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MOVE QUICKLY IN PUNISHING THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR STARTING THE HOSTILITIES. IF THE CHRISTIANS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE, THEY WILL LIKELY AVOID INITIATING MAJOR RETALIATION; HOWEVER, VENGEFUL RELATIVES COULD CONTINUE THE FIGHTING, AND LIKELY WILL.

5. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THIS SITUATION. EMBASSY BEIRUT BELIEVES AT A MINIMUM IT WILL INCREASE CHRISTIAN DISTRUST OF THE ADF BECAUSE OF THE ADF'S PERCEIVED FAILURE TO INTERVENE QUICKLY. ALSO, CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES ARE LIKELY TO HARDEN TOWARD OTHER RELIGIOUS GROUPS, AND THE CHRISTIANS COULD BECOME MORE UNCOMPROMISING IN THE SOUTH. (CONFIDENTIAL/NOFORN)

6. PALESTINIANS. HARD-LINE PALESTINIAN COMMANDO SPOKESMAN BASSAM ABU SHARIF SAID THAT HIS ORGANIZATION, THE PFLP, OPPOSED A NEGOTIATED MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. HIS STATEMENT WAS DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT A RECENTLY PUBLISHED TIME MAGAZINE REPORT THAT THE REJECTIONISTS HAD ALTERED THEIR POSITION AND WERE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL.

(UNCLASSIFIED)

7. ISRAEL. PRIME MINISTER BEGIN ARRIVES IN ROMANIA TOMORROW FOR AN OFFICIAL STATE VISIT, MARKING THE FIRST HIGH-LEVEL CONTACT BETWEEN ROMANIA AND ISRAEL SINCE 1972. ROMANIA IS THE ONLY WARSAW PACT MEMBER THAT HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU WILL VIEW THE TRIP AS A VINDICATION OF HIS EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN FRIENDLY CONTACTS WITH ALL SIDES IN THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE, AND OF ROMANIA'S INDEPENDENT POLICIES IN GENERAL.

8. THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR IN BUCHAREST TOLD US DIPLOMATS THAT THE VISIT WILL FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND ON JEWISH CONFIDENTIAL

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EMIGRATION TO ISRAEL. BEGIN WILL HOLD EXTENDED PRIVATE TALKS WITH CEAUSECU, AND WILL MEET WITH MEMBERS OF ROMANIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY. THE ISRAELI LEADER WILL ALSO ATTEND SABBATH SERVICES AT A SYNAGOGUE IN BUCHAREST.

9. CEAUSESCU WILL PROBABLY OFFER HIS "GOOD OFFICES" AS A CONCILIATOR IN ISRAEL'S DISPUTE WITH THE ARAB STATES. ROMANIA HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS--INCLUDING THE PLO WHICH MAINTAINS A LIAISON OFFICE IN BUCHAREST. EVEN IF BEGIN DECLINES THE OFFER, CEAUSESCU WILL STILL BE ABLE TO RELAY THE ISRAELI VIEW-POINT TO ROMANIA'S ARAB FRIENDS--AND TO THE SOVIETS.

10. BUCHAREST HAS A MIXED RECORD ON JEWISH EMIGRATION. ACCORDING TO JANUARY 1977 CENSUS FIGURES, ROMANIA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY NUMBERS 25,700. THIS FIGURE IS PRESUMABLY UNDERSTATED; THE OFFICIAL ISRAELI ESTIMATE IS 60,000. DESPITE THEIR RESTRICTIVE EMIGRATION POLICIES, THE ROMANIANS NEGOTIATED A "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" WITH THE ISRAELIS EARLY THIS YEAR TO ALLOW 3,000 ROMANIAN JEWS TO LEAVE FOR ISRAEL DURING 1977. FROM JANUARY TO JULY, HOWEVER, ONLY 600 TO 700 PERSONS ACTUALLY DEPARTED--PERHAPS HALF THE 1976 RATE. THE BEGIN VISIT MAY SPUR CEAUSESCU TO ACCELERATE THE FLOW.

11. IN 1967, WHEN THE USSR AND ITS OTHERS ALLIES BROKE RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL FOLLOWING THE MIDDLE EAST WAR, ROMANIA REFUSED TO FOLLOW SUIT DESPITE SOVIET PRESSURE. THIS CAUSED A NUMBER OF ARAB STATES TO BREAK RELATIONS WITH ROMANIA. RELATIONS WITH THE ARABS WERE GRADUALLY RESTORED, BUT ROMANIA CONTINUED TO IMPORT IRANIAN OIL THROUGH A PIPELINE ACROSS ISRAEL. CERTAIN ROMANIAN ENTERPRISES WERE PUT ON THE ARAB BOY-CONFIDENTIAL

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COTT LIST IN AUGUST 1975 AND REMAINED ON IT FOR ABOUT
A YEAR.

12. ROMANIA PERSISTS IN ITS "BALANCED" MIDDLE EAST
POLICY. IT IS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO
EXIST AS A SEPARATE NATION BUT ALSO SUPPORTS A
PALESTINIAN "NATIONAL STATE." CEAUSESCU EVIDENTLY
BELIEVES THAT RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL WILL BOLSTER HIS
INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY, AND HE PROBABLY ALSO EXPECTS
THAT HIS STAND WILL WIN SOME POINTS IN US EYES.

(CONFIDENTIAL) CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE202108
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AAVACCARO:CA
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770307-0227
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770827/aaaaawkj.tel
Line Count: 186
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 351c1054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1496067
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTSUM 387 - AUGUST 24, 1977 NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS
TAGS: PINR, EG, IS
To: SINAI
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/351c1054-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009